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Sighting of Waldrapp *Geronticus eremita* in Eritrea near the Red Sea coast

At about 07:30 on 8 February 1997, I observed five adult Waldrapp Ibises *Geronticus eremita* just off the road near the cemetery at Harghigo (15°31'32.1"N, 39°26'52.3"E) about 15-min drive south of Massawa on the road to Arafaille. The birds were in a short-grass area between the road and the hills further east. Their identity was unmistakable, as the long, lax feathers behind the head, and the bald rose-red head on a dark ibis, are unique. Two colleagues, Kidane Gebre Kidan and Michiel Cherlet, were with me and shared the sighting.

Close inspection to reveal what they were feeding on was inconclusive. The only potential food items seen were a single nymph of *Chrotogonus homalodemus* (Orthoptera: Pyrgomorphidae) and two adults of *Acrotylus longipes* (Orthoptera: Acridinae). It is likely that they were also feeding on the ant-lion larvae (Neuroptera: Myrmelionidae) that are abundant in those soils.

The Waldrapp is a severely threatened species that is presently known to nest only in Morocco, and possibly Algeria (Hancock *et al.* 1992, Collar *et al.* 1994). There appear to have been no records in Eritrea for about 30 years, although the Massawa area used to be an important overwintering/non-breeding area for the bird (J. C. Hillman, pers. comm.). There have been recent reports from Yemen (near Taiz), and a request through the news media resulted in a report of a sighting from Northern Somalia which is, as yet, unconfirmed (J. S. Ash, pers. comm.).

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